

# The Christian News-Letter

Edited by  
J. H. OLDHAM

November 17th, 1943

DEAR MEMBER,

We come back to the forthcoming Education Bill. We shall have occasion to do so often until the issue has been decided. There are two vital questions to be settled: First, do we intend to deal justly with the boys and girls of the nation? Secondly, are we resolved to equip the nation for the vast responsibilities which it must bear in the post-war world? There is no possible means by which we can fulfil the tasks which victory will lay on us except by raising up a generation of men and women capable of meeting the demand of their time. To have an education bill now means that we deliberately choose to make the training of our youth a major claim upon the country's resources.

## TWO STAGES IN OUR PURPOSE

If we are determined on these things we must realize that our choice involves us in a long struggle. First the new legislation must reach the statute book. That is the immediate stage. Then it must be translated from words into facts. The first stage is not without its dangers. It seems almost unthinkable that expectations which have been aroused in the widest circles should be dashed, but it must be remembered that those who fully see and understand what is at stake are in a minority. There are plenty of people lacking in imagination, immersed in concerns of the moment and interests of their own and entirely unaware of the profound crisis in which our own people and mankind as a whole are involved, who are indifferent to change or may even actively oppose it. It would be foolish to under-estimate the strength of these forces.

Apart from inertia and active hostility we have to reckon with the effect on all of us of the exhaustion of the war and the multiplicity of problems which crowd upon our attention. It is easy in this mood to yield to siren voices which urge us to get on with the war, to avoid questions which arouse controversy and to leave educational reform to be undertaken later, when conditions are more favourable. The experience of the last war ought to teach us that in the welter of things which have to be done when peace comes those matters which are already in hand stand most chance of being brought to fulfilment. Unless we erect the scaffolding immediately it will be years before the walls of the building begin to rise. Once the outlines of the structure are known, the Local Education Authorities and all the other bodies which are responsible for the laying of one brick upon another can begin to form their plans.

It is of the utmost importance at this time that every member of Parliament should be made aware that there are enlightened groups of people in his constituency who see the dangers of delay and are eager that the fullest measure of support should be given to the President of the Board when he introduces his bill. It is always the way that those who oppose change are more ready to make themselves heard than those who welcome it.

## THE SECOND STAGE: TURNING INTENTIONS INTO FACTS

✱ We have so far emphasized the practical necessity of getting an education bill passed at once in order that we may be ready to embark on the actual building as soon as the war is over. There is a deeper significance which for Christians is of more moment. The tide of the war has turned. We are well aware that if we can continue our efforts for a year longer, victory at least in the West will be ours. At the same time we look outwards upon the continent which has been the cradle and home of our Western culture and see famine, disease, ruin and despair. The eyes of millions in Europe are turned towards us. This mood of sober realization of our destiny will pass, as all moments of vision do. The question is whether we spend it while it lasts in making vague resolutions that we will bear our burden and fulfil the rôle of leadership which is being thrust upon us, or whether we make an act of *committal* and say "This and this will we do." An education bill now can be (if we look behind the exterior provision to the inner meaning) an effective way of saying: "We commit ourselves to the raising up of a generation far better equipped to fulfil its destiny than was the last post-war generation, and if after ten years we find the bill still on the statute book and its proposals only very sketchily realized, we shall regard this not as a misfortune but as a disgrace."

Our first and most obvious committal is to large expenditure. To do the job properly will probably cost a good deal more than is envisaged in the White Paper. We have been willing to pay an income tax of ten shillings in the pound to avert the intolerable fate of subjection to the Axis Powers. The acid test which confronts us as Christians and as lovers of our country is what price we are prepared to pay to ensure that every member of the community is given a fair chance in life. The material cost will not be only in terms of money. It will mean that because we are committed to giving priority to the education of our boys and girls, materials and labour and money will be used in the immediate post-war years, when all will be scarce, to build schools when a great many of us would prefer shops or cinemas or even church halls.

Our second committal is to getting the *thing* that we want and to refusing to be fooled into supposing that changing the form is the same as changing the reality. The White Paper provides for the inception all over the country of "Young People's Colleges," for part-time education of all young people who have left school and are under the age of eighteen. We shall have fulfilled the letter if thousands of boys and girls are unwillingly dragged to give their half-hearted attention to a day's lessons which they regard with boredom and contempt.



We shall have achieved the *thing* if the word "college" comes to have for all who have passed through these new institutions an entirely new association of ideas, something which they connect with an enrichment and fulfilment of their lives. Again, a short cut to achieving secondary education for all is to allow the present differences between elementary and secondary education in such things as buildings, size of classes, equipment and playing fields to be levelled out in a downward direction. To get the thing we want we are committed to raising the standard in staffing and building of the majority of our schools to that of the small minority—an immense task.

Our third committal is to the taking of a large risk. To enlarge the opportunities for education might only mean that more people are given the chance of carving out a career for themselves in a society whose aims are wholly acquisitive. People are so conscious of the difficulty of using these opportunities rightly and of the dangers of their being used wrongly as to be completely inhibited from exerting themselves to create the opportunities. That surely is an attitude that is clean contrary to the Christian duty of loving our neighbour, since it condemns a large majority of the boys and girls of the nation to frustrated lives. As Professor Karl Barth, the famous Swiss theologian, has said in another connection in a recent open letter to American Christians,<sup>1</sup> "it is never wise to allow oneself to be delayed or diverted from the right path by the possibility of all sorts of dangers which might develop sooner or later." An immense expenditure of mental and spiritual energy is necessary if we are to make clear to ourselves as a nation that true education is not simply a privilege, still less a perquisite, but is in part a burden. It imposes heavier responsibilities. It is something that for this reason many people do not want. Every one wants to make a living, and will accept such education as is necessary to achieve this purpose. But to accept education as the means of enabling one to give more, that is the point at which the real battle lies.

It is in this context that the question of the right provision for religious education becomes important. It is entirely in place for those who have strong convictions about the right policy to press their views and do their best to get them adopted. It is not less incumbent on them to seek such accommodation with those who differ from them as will ensure that the main purpose of the bill is not defeated. It is good to be able to record that since we wrote about this matter a month ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London in their Diocesan Conferences, and Dr. S. M. Berry, Secretary of the Congregational Union, in a letter to *The Times*, have made perfectly clear that while they intend to press for modifications which they regard as desirable, the main purpose of the bill will have their determined support.

Present differences of opinion about religious education are tied up with the question of the future of denominational schools. We ought not to allow ourselves to forget that although about half the elementary schools in this country are denominational schools, two-

<sup>1</sup> Published in the autumn number of the American quarterly journal, *Christendom*.

thirds of our children under the age of fourteen are in state schools. The President of the Board has shown in his White Paper that he is anxious to see everything possible done for the religious education of these children. There is, therefore, open to us a chance to make the best use we can of the time given to religious education in the state school, and whatever its limitations, to condemn it as useless (as has occasionally been done) would be the height of folly. To this vital matter of religious education we hope to return in a future News-Letter.

## BY WHOM IS THE JOB TO BE DONE ?

We look to the President of the Board to continue to give the lead which the White Paper has begun, and to refuse to be deflected by opposition or by alarms about finance from the purpose which has been taken in hand.

But it is perhaps not generally realized by those outside educational circles that the Board of Education is dependent on the drive and efficiency of local authorities to get its policy put into effect. It cannot "order and the thing is done." It can initiate policy, it can appoint a day by which local authorities must conform or lose its financial support. No part of our national life is more dependent on local action than education. The main job of the Board is by persistent effort to raise the standard of education throughout the country—smaller classes, extended schooling, more and better teachers, larger playgrounds, better health services and amenities—everything, in fact, which will bring up the general standard nearer to the very high standard of our best schools—these are the things which we can expect the Board of Education to make its first concern.

But while the Board of Education forms, as it were, the upper mill-stone, there ought to be a nether mill-stone of local public opinion, formed of teachers and parents and all public-spirited citizens, pressing on their Local Education Authorities for ever-increasing conformity to the Board's high standards.

## THE SCHOOLS ARE OURS

In the possession of a public opinion on education we are more lamentably equipped than most of the Dominions and many countries on the continent. Why is it that public opinion in this country (the average parent, for example) is so apathetic about what goes on in our schools ? Why have we no general sense that the schools belong to us ? The reason may be partly historical. We did not, as a people, fight and struggle to make our own schools. They were given to us by the church and then by the state. Occasionally one sees an exceptional headmaster who has the parents of his boys really on their toes, eager to understand and share in what he is doing ; or the headmistress of an infant school in a slum area who knows each child and each home's circumstances, goads and chivvies the mothers, and, in spite of her intimidating qualities, is regarded as a tower of strength and good advice. But these are rare. Taking the country as whole, it is not an



exaggeration of the truth to say that the average parent who shook the dust of the school from his feet at fourteen and has not been inside a school building since, regards education as a painful process which his children must grin and bear as he bore it in his own childhood. It is like the weather and rationing. There is nothing to be done about it. Smaller classes would enable teachers to know their children as persons (for a class of fifty approximates more to a parade-ground than to a family). Extended schooling would keep children at school until they were of an age to understand its real value, and the parents of the future generation may, we hope, be less school-shy than those of the present. Small beginnings have been made in parent-teacher co-operation, but we are still very far from any widely diffused sense that the schools belong to the people.

## TEACHERS AND SOCIETY

But the difficulty is not only on the parents' side. We shall never arrive at the point of having an awakened public interest in education so long as teachers continue to suffer, as so many of them do at present, under a sense of being a class apart from society. A story recently told to me illustrates the point. The secretary of a certain Women's Institute in a country village was upbraided by the local organizer for not having seen to it that the branch elected a representative committee. When the organizer returned, the secretary greeted her with glee: "We have elected a committee—five ladies, five women and the schoolmaster's wife." This sense of being treated as a class apart is not confined to country teachers. It is a scandal that those to whom we trust our children should have so small a share in the social life of our community. But it is hardly surprising when one stops to consider the ridiculous fashion in which we recruit our teachers from that small and unrepresentative body of children who at eleven manage to get into a secondary school; how we segregate them by sexes at the age of eighteen in training colleges which for the most part are built as far as possible from centres of cultural, political or social life; how we fill their time from morning till night with the double process of educating them and training them to educate others; and how we launch them into positions of very great responsibility, and pay them not for their responsibility as guardians of our children, but by their academic qualification. The head master of a rural senior school by his personality and his work affects the lives of hundreds of boys, yet after twenty years of service he is still earning £300 per annum less than the young man who at thirty is just beginning his headmastership at the local grammar school.

Second only in importance to the White Paper itself will be the findings of the McNair Committee on the selection and training of teachers. Buildings, amenities, reforms of many kinds are urgently needed; but no single factor in education is as important as the personality of the teacher, and if we are to bring our schools into the central place of honour which they should occupy in our society, we must

attract to the ranks of the teaching profession a large number of our best young people with the widest possible variety of talent, background and personal gifts. When we get them, we must pay them and treat them as though we really meant all the compliments to their importance which for very long we have paid them in words.

## THE NATIONAL VOCATION

We can rightly understand the significance of the proposals in the White Paper on education only by viewing them in relation to the vocation and destiny of Great Britain. If there is a destiny that beckons us, it will not be achieved at a stroke, but only by the succession of creative choices. If at this juncture we make up our minds to do what is right and just for our young, we may be led on step by step to greater things that are at present far beyond our horizon.

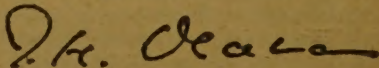
## THE CHRISTIAN FRONTIER

Since the death of F. C. Maxwell, nearly a year ago, our staff has been too small to do properly the job we have in hand. The reinforcement of which we have been sorely in need is now in sight. The Rev. H. G. M. Clarke, the headmaster of Repton, has decided to give up headmastering and join in our adventure. He is coming to us at the end of the year to be, with Mrs. Bliss, one of the secretaries of the Christian Frontier Council. The expansion of its work, which his coming makes possible, will also serve the Christian News-Letter by making links with a wider range of activities and thus multiplying the sources from which material will flow into its pages.

## THE SUPPLEMENT

Dr. William Paton is a young medical practitioner. What he says brings to bear upon a problem often discussed in academic terms the experience of one who meets it at every turn in its practical aspects. We value it also as a contribution from the son of a distinguished father.

Yours sincerely,



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In the past our members have welcomed the idea of sending a subscription to THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER as a Christmas gift to their friends. Fortunately, we can still accept some new subscriptions on our 1943 paper quota. Members are, therefore, again invited to avail themselves of our Christmas gift scheme.

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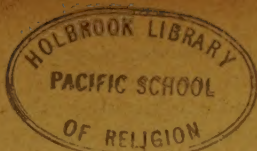
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## THE CONFLICT OF SCIENCE AND FAITH IN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

By WILLIAM PATON

Modern discussions about science and religion have tended to gloss over the seriousness and depth of the cleft between them. This stands out if we put a question which is much neglected, but is practically one of the most important: "Does science make it easier or harder to be a Christian?" Here we shall find the deeper causes of the cleft, off the track of logical argument; and here we may find, what is always needed badly, some hint of what we can do to bridge it. We cannot here discuss many important preliminary questions. We shall proceed at once to enquire what factors come into operation among those with scientific training, at the birth of Christian faith and understanding, and in its maintenance.

If we turn first to what (in some form) is an essential part of Christianity, conversion, we see science antagonistic at several points.

It is a cardinal axiom in present-day thought that beliefs should not be backed by will, that they should be tentative: that leaps of faith should be temporary and reversible. The "committal" of a Christian is foreign to this entirely. His faith may even be held for a while *in spite of* his rational mind and often rightly: to veer about with every argument for or against religion is to reduce it to irrelevance. Scientists may act on an unproved theory, in default of anything better, occasionally—and thus exhibit a practical "faith" of a sort; but it would not be true to say that the practicality of Christianity outweighs the hazards of the Christian jump of faith in scientific eyes.

Again, the mind has a natural tendency to refuse or contradict, and if the matter before it suggests new action or criticises old, this tendency is the greater. Science increases this in its own direction: the outstanding virtue in science is a questioning mind. But the outstanding virtue in Christianity is rather in the direction of simple faith. Science begets and treasures doubting Thomases. The Church was founded and will always be founded upon its Peters. We must face it, science fills minds with the tendency *not* to believe, even above their normal inclination that way. A scientific Christian can only arise with prolonged and forceful contact with Christianity.

Science, particularly nowadays, is well on the way to providing an enthusiasm for millions: an enthusiasm which has its own not disagreeable discipline, and offering attractive rewards. Medicine adds to the purity of scientific endeavour a complex of professional loyalty and pride and power of a notable kind, which may easily become the dominant force in a man's life. Christianity has to come with vividness and vigour sufficient to secure attention.

A man who is a Christian must have studied and understood Christianity. That is to say, he must know something of the Bible, and he must understand what is meant by the many difficult and sometimes misleading terms used. Little is left of either time or energy, from the life of the science student or worker, for reflection on, or study of, these things. Scientific study induces a profound "failure of conception." From his unfamiliarity with religious concepts, the scientist comes to have the most fantastic ideas about what Christians mean by, for example, "God" or "prayer." It is little wonder that he refuses to believe in them.

## THE MAINTENANCE OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF SCIENTIFIC THOUGHT

Christian faith grows and develops. There is associated with scientific practice a number of factors, whose importance lies in producing a mood, or atmosphere, in which faith shrivels or dies of inanition. I have found no sound principle of classification and have done no more than name some of these factors separately.

In the first place a scientific habit of mind produces a belief that it is the most valuable of all mental habits, the value consisting in its power of making a sound judgment, of being dispassionate, of approaching things from a material, palpable angle. It has many triumphs to its credit. It is very attractive to those who know it, simply as a mental activity. All this tends to a satisfaction with scientific thinking, and a reluctance to apply any other type of thought.

Thus rather than change its style of thought, it will apply its methods to material unsuitable to it. It will assert (or rather, its exponents will find themselves asserting) that science, so successful in its own field, is adequate to any other: that it should replace all others. From a reluctance to look farther than the material of science, we come to an extension of its activity to materials *not* those of science.

Under the wing of science have been hatched many theories exploited many times in attacks on religion: the evolution of man, the anthropology of religion, the mechanisms of psychology revealed by Freud, the discovery of conditioned reflexes by Pavlov, the theory of behaviourism, the laws of causation and conservation in physics;



all these, whatever may be said about their truth or falsehood in respect of religion, share one thing—they establish a kinship, a line of descent, between man and animals and inorganic matter. To the uncritical mind, this seems to detract something from his dignity, to make it incredible that his highest aims should be any more than a reshuffling of his lowest.

Science, particularly medical science, gives one a sense of power over matter and over other men. I have it in my power to make a man live or to let him die, when I practise as a physician. He obeys my orders. He takes my medicines. He even pays me for my exhibition of mastery over him! All this is bad for the humility necessary to religious faith. I become self-sufficient, too, and the habit of carrying other people's responsibilities (it is amazing how quickly they thrust them on to the shoulders of a doctor) engenders an immunity to criticism, a belief in my own intrinsic worth and independence, which is equally hostile to religion.

Science (and again particularly medical science) reduces men to units in a crowd. The "interesting case" in the ward, the post-mortem, the lectures at out-patients (all highly necessary, be it said), put the patient in the status of just another specimen. This makes it no easier to foster a belief in a personal relation between the "specimens" and God.

Science has little use for "solitariness" (referring to Whitehead's dictum that "Religion is what a man does with his own solitariness"): meditation on the inward mind is not an activity useful to it. It likes to look up literature, classify, criticize, formulate theories, argue. The lonely man looking at his own soul gets no encouragement from scientific habit (nor perhaps from a good many Christians!).

Science has little use for the ignorant, whether from stupidity or from inexperience. It requires knowledge of the literature and analysis of possible criticisms. Until these are satisfied it holds back from any definite conclusion. Thus, even if the leap of faith is made, one soaked in such thinking will find it difficult to maintain his faith when he has had little theological training, little Bible teaching, little of expository sermons, and is uneasily aware of all the points at which religious faith may be attacked.

All these weigh against the growth of Christian faith. One may notice, on the other hand, that certain things are on its side. The pattern that science reveals, the power that it gives to man to control his life and better it, can be read by some as the workings of God. The contact with death and sickness and pain, the tradition and atmosphere of service, the awareness of broad social implications—all these in



medicine are things that may turn a mind to deeper thinking. But they are not many.

We arrive at this position then : that there is, in scientific thought and practice, a large number of factors at work rendering it hard for Christianity to be accepted, to be understood, or to be sustained. They do this, not by direct attack and attempts at disproof or refutation, but by turning the mind away from Christianity, by making it seem improbable, and pointless and incomprehensible, and unscientific.

And what is the use of this conclusion ? It has a twofold importance : first, that once these factors are recognised, they can be allowed for : minds in which they were distorting the conclusions may be freed, and some unnecessary conflicts resolved.

Second, that these factors have obscured the real issue to a great extent. This is the question of how far religious faith and scientific thought and practice are compatible. We have seen how, if a man is brought up as a scientist, receives little instruction in Christianity, is hard-worked, is successful as a scientist, enthusiastic about the value of science, respected in his profession, and wielding power (directly or indirectly) outside it, and never receives any adequate contact with the Christian message, it cannot be expected that he will be a Christian ; and his tendency will be to believe Christianity totally unreasonable and pointless. In short, the unchecked operation of these factors *exaggerates* the cleft we have mentioned. If we wish to find some way of reconciliation between what claims to be of supreme importance (Christianity) and what is of very great importance (Science), we must at least recognize and allow for these factors in our own thinking, and put it up to others to do the same.

There remain other problems to be settled. There must be many factors which have tended towards a too easy acceptance of Christianity—are we then to tell such individuals in whom they operate to cast their faith overboard and to begin again ? Or again—if science makes faith harder, and that faith is of supreme importance, is science not therefore a force for evil ? Or should it be said that the harder the faith, the more worth while, even though the Church be scanty ?

In this direction, it seems to me, lies the ground where the battles of science and faith must be fought, battles strenuous and unpredictable, to be fought, not with the amiably co-operative superficiality of the conference table, and not only between scientists and theologians ; but with strictest accuracy, and with an eye for the practical application rather than for the defeat of some private enemy of the opposite camp !

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